

minds in motion
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Inquiry and Teaching

in•quir•y (in kwī' rē), n.,

1. a systematic investigation.
2. to search for information and understanding by questioning.

teach•ing (tē' ching), n.,

the act of helping someone learn.



Upon joining a docent-led program, members of the general public and school groups shift from casual visitors to “learners.” They become participants in an *educational* experience. The use of questioning, or inquiry, can be an important and appropriate method for structuring their lesson.

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The Docent Educator

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Cover Photo:

Krista Butcher, a docent with the Sunrise Museums in Charleston, WV, uses inquiry to teach sixth graders who are learning to understand and appreciate art.

minds in motion Teaching

Asking Questions

Watch people at dinner buffets. They slow their usual pace, survey the range of offerings, investigate alternatives, and actively pursue every intriguing morsel.

If only our minds were as adventurous as our palates! When presented with a sumptuous array of exhibited objects to sample, most of us look too quickly, resist investigating, and dismiss thoughts and ideas before giving them consideration.

Teaching with questions forces learners to alter these behaviors.

reinforces learning behaviors consistent with perceptual and intellectual self-sufficiency.

Visitors arrive at institutions with widely differing amounts of interest and information. Inquiry teaching accommodates their diversity by allowing learners to participate in the acquisition of objective and subjective data consistent with their various backgrounds, interests, and levels of sophistication.

You may have noticed the alternating reference to "visitors" as "learners."

Inquiry teaching assists visitors to transition into learners by helping them develop and practice learning skills -- skills they can use again on return visits and in other contexts.

Inquiry teaching, or instruction by asking questions, is not easy or natural. It's a technique that requires practice. And, among its challenges, the most difficult is constructing and sequencing questions that will propel investigation and promote understanding.



National Museum of American History docent Delores Myers stands ready to help visitors transition to "learners."

Inquiry slows the pace, magnifies what is seen, and amplifies what is felt. Skillful questioning requires learners to observe purposefully, develop ideas, make discoveries, examine responses and attitudes, and postpone decision-making. In short, inquiry teaching

Constructing Questions

The questions used with inquiry teaching should be "open-ended." Open-ended questions ask learners to make observations or generate ideas, while accommodating their divergent perspectives. Open-ended questions

with Questions

by Alan Gartenhaus

can have many appropriate answers. Closed-ended questions, by contrast, call for brief and predictable answers that usually consist of remembered factual information.

Since inquiry teaching serves to stimulate active exploration and reflective thinking, closed-ended questions that challenge the learners' prior knowledge, such as "Does anyone know what type of bird this is?" are less useful. Questions ought to prompt learners to acquire information or make determinations, rather than test their ability to recall facts.

Sequencing Questions

The questions posed during inquiry lessons must be thoughtfully and purposefully sequenced. They are not put forth randomly. In his text, *Ah Hah! The Inquiry Process of Generating and Testing Ideas*, John McCollum offers a useful model. He recommends that the first question asked be a "describing" one, calling for any observation. The follow-up question should request "explanations," forcing learners to more adequately reference their observations to the object or life form discussed. The third question should require "testing" the explanations by having learners generate ideas, hypotheses, or predictions. This sequence of **describing, explaining, and testing** gives inquiry lessons focus and an enabling structure.

A zoo or natural history docent using inquiry would inform her audience that the bird they're looking at is a Great Horned Owl. Then she might ask, "How is this bird different from song birds you've seen?" "Describing" questions such as this accommodate a wide range of

responses, while opening discussion possibilities further. Among the responses offered might be observations about the shape and size of the bird's claws, or talons. A follow-up, "explaining" question would require a more detailed description of just how the bird's talons differ in size and shape from

"Questions ought to prompt learners to acquire information or make determinations, rather than test their ability to recall facts."

others. A subsequent "testing" question, such as, "Why might these owls need such large, powerful talons?", challenges learners to develop ideas and hypotheses about their observations and explanations. By teaching with questions in this example, learners glean information and understandings about such topics as habitat, food sources, and evolved specialization without having to be told.

This same sequence is appropriate to all subject areas and content considerations. An art museum docent exploring the subjective qualities of a painting with learners would use the same structure of describing, explaining, and testing questions. His "describing" question might ask for the emotional response provoked by the work. His "explaining" question would ask learners to identify those aspects of the painting that contribute to their emotional response. His "testing" question might have learners

speculate about the changes required for this painting to convey an opposite emotion. This sequence allows learners to make their own discoveries about the range of emotional content in a work; the manner in which the artist manipulated materials to convey such content; and how the artist's deliberate choices determined the work's meaning.

Some might prefer that docents function as "talking labels," simply identifying objects and dispensing information. However, this is counterproductive to teaching's ultimate goal of producing independent learners. Inquiry demonstrates ways of examining and explaining objects, responses, and phenomena, and encourages learners to generate their own ideas and meanings.

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Inquiry and the Primary Learner

Questions and Young Children

“I know! I know!” Little voices shrill with excitement and little hands wave frantically. Kindergartners, eager to impress me clamor for my attention. They are ready to answer my question, “What is history?” The winner’s response tells me a lot about the perspective of my audience. “History,” he announces with confidence, “is something that happened a real looooong time ago ... like in 1989!”

Years ago, radio and television personality Art Linkletter compiled a book entitled *Kids Say the Darndest Things!* Most docents could write their own books about the funny and insightful things kids say during tours. Looking beyond the humor, however, children’s questions, and their responses to your questions, provide important clues to their developmental levels.

Just as baby humans require easily digestible foods for their immature physical systems, “baby” learners need questions that can be processed by their immature intellectual systems.

Understanding the relatively predictable developmental levels of children enables docents to pose questions appropriate, and “digestible,” for every developmental level of their audience.

The kindergartner with the unerring definition of history and the inexact concept of time has reached,

along with most pre-schoolers

and first graders, what psychologist Jean Piaget called the *preoperational stage*. This child is very imitative; many of those raised hands were lifted in response to the other raised hands, not the question. He has a short

attention span; call on someone quickly, or your audience may have already forgotten the question!

Children in the preoperational stage are generally ages 4 - 7. They are among the youngest children docents tour. Because children at this level have limited experience, they often maintain a storehouse of misinformation. They ask lots of questions. Sometimes they ask questions to “check” the information they’ve gained through their senses; often they ask questions to attract or hold others’ attention. In the latter case, they aren’t too interested in the answers and may continue to ask the same question several times.

Completely ego-centric, this beginning student often volunteers information totally unrelated to the topic discussed, an occurrence sure to discombobulate even the most experienced docent. To the docent’s carefully composed question about the fire engine on exhibit in front of them, one child may respond with a gruesomely detailed story about how his dog threw up her breakfast on the living room carpet this morning, making Mommy angry and forcing him to be late for school. This story will be followed by a series of other dog and/or “throw up” stories. Another interesting characteristic of this age, the blurring of fact and fantasy, means that at least one of those stories is about a dog that exists only in its owner’s imagination.

What kinds of questions, then, are most appropriate for these primary learners?

Babies, those in the prior stage of intellectual development, learn about the world by “tasting” it. Everything

“... ‘baby’ learners need questions that can be processed by their immature intellectual systems.”

by Jackie Littleton

from their own fingers to the cat's ear goes into their mouths. Primaries, however, learn by touch. Because many museums, zoos, and botanical gardens must limit this sensory experience, questions that help children at this level look, and really see, are very useful.

Classifying objects in an exhibit by increasingly more complex characteristics (colors, shapes, textures, uses, sizes, and so forth) helps children see details they may overlook without the direction of the docent. Locating all the triangles in an antique quilt, for example, helps learners see beyond the general (the quilt) to the specific (the individual pieces of cloth that the quilt is composed of).

Comparing objects in the museum to objects within their own realm also helps children "see" and moves them conceptually from the concrete to the abstract.

Docent: What does this buggy have that your car has?

Child: A seat.

Docent: Where do you sit when you ride in a car?

Child: In the back.

Docent: Where would you sit if I let you ride in this buggy?

Child: I'd have to sit in Mommy's lap 'cause there's no back seat!

Questioning techniques that accept the comments of many children are very successful with this age. Building on the shared experiences of the tour allows even children with very limited prior experience to participate. "What did you like best?" not only gives every child a chance to receive your attention, but gives you the chance to remind them of the name of "that red thing we saw first." Redirection, or directing the same question to several different children without repeating or

rephrasing the question, breaks the usual question-response-question-response cycle. It also serves to increase the participation of all children. A deliberate questioning pace of 3-5 seconds between question and answer also gives more children



"Pre-operational," first-grade students await their tour of the Denver Museum of Natural History.

time to think of an answer.

Divergent questions, those that encourage a wide variety of perspectives, usually elicit wonderfully varied responses from primaries. Children in this stage may not "know," but that won't stop them from offering their opinions. Following a visit to the museum's Christmas-bedecked Victorian parlor, I once asked a group of first graders how Santa Claus got back up chimneys. The more "literate" explained the "finger aside of his nose" theory, but one analytical young man carefully demonstrated the technique he had learned in physical education -- you simply press feet and hands in opposition against the sides of the chimney and climb!

The phrasing of questions is also important. Children at this level of development are just learning what a question is ... so don't confuse them further by turning a statement into a question. "This large piece of furniture is a what?" leaves children at this stage

bewildered. Order, too, is important. Ask the question, then call on a child. If you call a child's name first, the panic you initiate may block his hearing the question.

Children in the preoperational stage not only are in the beginning of their intellectual development, they are also small and vulnerable. Questions that give them power are very effective. Power comes from knowing. (That is one reason children of this age delight in memorizing the multisyllabic names of dinosaurs or video monsters!) Providing information to the teacher prior to a tour -- and following up on that information during the tour -- gives children the opportunity to "show off" their knowledge. (This also may prevent "showing off" in less acceptable ways.)

Knowing what children are like as learners -- understanding what to expect from their level of intellectual development -- can help docents create the experiences and questions that make "going to the museum, zoo, or garden" a favorite activity of primary school children and a lifetime choice for these future adults.

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Reappraising Praise:

Responding to Visitors' Answers

by Felice Kaufmann

Motivation. Conventional wisdom tell us that it is the key to learning. You've practiced motivating groups and individuals by developing your ability to ask good questions. However, your response to learners' answers can be as strong a motivation tool as the questions you ask.

Consider this example. A group of sixth grade students visits your museum for a field trip. You greet them at the door and explain that your job is to tell them interesting things about the exhibits and ask questions about their experience. At your first stop, you ask "What does this object tell you about life during the nineteenth century?"

One student eagerly replies, "They had no electricity."

"What a smart boy," you say.

Another student raises her hand. "People were self-reliant."

"That's a perfect answer," you remark. When you ask for additional responses no hands are raised.

What happened? You've learned that praise is an important motivational technique and you think it's great when someone praises you. How could your responses have affected these students in such dramatically different ways? And what could you have done instead?

To best respond to learners, the dilemma of "praise" must be examined. Many education professionals have proposed theories about why praise can motivate some students but discourage others. In their

popular book *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*, Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish suggest several reasons why praise can elicit negative responses. In our previous example, the second student might have believed that, having given the perfect response to the first question, she might falter on the next. Or, she might have felt the docent was

clearly does not work. While you may find it difficult to change your natural way of responding to learners, the following suggestions might be useful as you examine and refine your response style.

Learn to Really Pay Attention

Another tour shuffling by, a crate being unloaded in the next room, another group standing where you hoped to take your tour next — these are just a few of the distractions you may encounter when working with groups. Despite these, or other, annoyances, try to focus your attention fully on the visitor while he is answering your question. Make sure you face him squarely, leaning slightly toward him if possible. Also, use your eyes to communicate. This means paying attention to everything about him — his posture, mannerisms, the look on his face. Maintain steady eye contact so that he is aware of your effort to notice him. Be aware that

your non-verbal communication is often more important than the words you use.

Point out the Contribution, Not the Quality of the Answer

Many authors have suggested that we are a nation of praise addicts who perform for compliments, prizes, or rewards. Non-traditional educational settings, such as museums and zoos, offer excellent opportunities to begin changing this system. Most important to this process is the docent's ability to



Are you prepared if praise inhibits, rather than encourages?

insincere because he was looking at another student while praising her. Or, she might have been reminded by the docent's praise of all the less than perfect answers she gave in her math class that morning. (Other students, who were eager to participate, can also become reluctant. The "perfect" answer is a tough act to follow.)

You needn't eliminate praise from your vocabulary entirely, but developing alternative ways of responding to learners will give you the techniques you need when praise

provide a psychologically safe environment for visitors to use their imagination to ask or answer questions. To do this, you must learn to acknowledge students' answers without judgment — positive or negative.

When responding to a learner, use words that describe the visitor's contribution to the discussion, rather than praising or criticizing the content of the answer. For example, in response to "they had no electricity" you could reply, "you're helping us think about how life was different then." Or, to "people were self-reliant," a comment like "you're seeing how the environment affects people's character" would be appropriate.

Encourage Creative Thinking with Creative Responding

In your training, as well as in previous issues of this publication, you learned that museums are excellent places for creative thinking to occur. You probably have practiced various instructional strategies to stimulate creative thought. Creative responding, however, is just as important to creative development and just as challenging to the learner.

Books of techniques for creativity training are found in many bookstores. Most are excellent resources. An especially good technique — one that is not always mentioned in popular books — is SCAMPER, introduced many years ago by the late Bob Eberle. SCAMPER is an acronym that prompts the following cues for creative thinking: Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Magnify, Minify, Put to Other Uses, Eliminate, Reverse, or Rearrange. The advantage of this method is that it can be applied in many situations and no concrete materials are required. To illustrate SCAMPER's usefulness, imagine you are conducting a tour of an historic home and you ask, "How is this home different from your own?" A student responds, "There's no television!" Instead of referring to the fact that television didn't exist during that period of history, use SCAMPER to formulate questions like, "What else

could people have done with their leisure time?" (Substitute), or "How might the house have changed if these people had television?" (Reverse). By challenging responses with creative questions, you encourage learners to go beyond content mastery into an exciting new learning process.

Rather than addressing specific instructional techniques, this approach to motivation focuses on response style. By practicing and using these skills, you can have a significant impact on the learners' desire to become engaged in the learning process — during your tour and throughout their lives!

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SCAMPER

S	Substitute	<i>To have a person or thing act or serve in place of another: Who else instead? What else? Other place? Other time?</i>
C	Combine	<i>To bring together, unite: How about a blend? Combine purposes? Combine ideas?</i>
A	Adapt	<i>To adjust for the purpose of suiting a condition or purpose: What else is like this? What other ideas does this suggest?</i>
M	Magnify	<i>To enlarge, make greater in form or quality: What to add? Greater frequency? Faster? Stronger? Larger?</i>
	Minify	<i>To make smaller, in form or quality: What to subtract? Smaller? Lighter? Slower? Less frequent?</i>
P	Put To Other Uses	<i>New ways to use it? Other uses if modified?</i>
E	Eliminate	<i>To remove or omit a part, quality or whole: What parts can be taken out? To keep the same function? To change the function?</i>
R	Reverse	<i>To place opposite, turn around: Opposites? Turn it backward? Upside down? Inside out?</i>
	Rearrange	<i>To change order or adjust layout: Other sequence? Change pace?</i>

What to do When People Talk Back!

Questioning Modern Art

Docents experimenting with the inquiry method often find that adults on tours are more comfortable with a lecture-oriented style of teaching. Within art museums, however, there is usually one type of art that never fails to draw comments from visitors: twentieth-century art. Docents talking about modern art experience the opposite problem when their audiences are all too eager to enter into a heated discussion. Furthermore, the questions that adults ask about modern art are often frustrating and difficult to answer. Comments such as, "My six year old child could do this!" and questions such as "How much did this cost?" are frequently encountered in exhibitions of abstract art. In fact, many docents often harbor such questions themselves.

The problem of interpreting modern art, especially non-objective and conceptual art, continues to plague museum educators. What is the proper way to handle a hostile or disbelieving public when you, yourself, may be having some doubts? Art critic Leo Steinberg points out that "some people always feel, and all people sometimes feel" discomfort when confronted with a new and unfamiliar style. This discomfort often manifests itself as a kind of hostility on behalf of the public that can direct itself to innocent and unsuspecting docents. Examining some of the causes of this hostility may help docents transform their public's antagonism into meaningful discussions.

Much twentieth-century art seeks to redefine the traditional materials, methods, and functions

of art. It intentionally challenges ideas about the role of art, raising questions rather than providing easy answers. It is therefore not surprising that uninitiated viewers have trouble accepting it as art. Instinctively, docents respond to this "credibility gap" in modern art by giving their audiences information about the history of art and how particular artists fit within that tradition. While talking about an artist's life or training can be helpful in persuading people that the object in question was made by a bona fide, serious artist, it does not make the credibility gap go away.

*"the docent
can find
herself in the
middle of
conflicting
values."*

In fact, viewers can often be surprisingly articulate in describing the visual qualities of abstract art or tuning in to the intentions of conceptual pieces while at the same time continuing to doubt their validity as art. For example, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Richard Long's *Limestone Circle*, stones found by the artist on one of his walks and arranged on the museum floor, often evokes insightful comments about art, nature, and the symbolism of circles, and comparisons with the Museum's own Japanese tea house garden. But visitors continue to question the "artness" of Long's *Limestone Circle* despite their proven ability to understand the piece in all its complexity. Giving people information about modern art, or even discussing its meaning, is often not sufficiently convincing to keep viewers from continuing to wonder, "Why is *that* art?"

It is helpful to consider why the credibility gap in modern art occurs. First, art is not a quality that is intrinsic to certain objects.



The question, "Why is that art?" may remain unanswered if docents respond only with facts or history.
photo: Kenneth Kauffman, courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art



Limestone Circle *Richard Long (b. 1945)*
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Purchased in memory of Mrs. H. Gates Lloyd with funds contributed by her family and friends
photo: Eric Mitchell

A painting is not art because it is a painting, but rather because in our society, certain ideas place the painting in the category of objects known as art, giving it an aesthetic value. The notion of art is a culturally conceived idea that is applied to certain types of things and activities. Viewers question the art value of a piece because they have their own personal ideas about what art is, and these ideas are clearly in conflict with the institutional definitions of art as evidenced by the art in the museum setting. Furthermore, museum visitors assume that the museum's definition of art is unique and absolute, an assumption that is fostered by the way in which many museums exhibit art. In truth, we live in a pluralistic society and museums are just one among many definers of art. However, when the definitions used by museum professionals differ from those of museum visitors, the docent can find herself in the middle of conflicting values.

While the individual definitions of art held by average museum visitors are perfectly valid, they do not play an active role in shaping the decisions made by art world professionals. The anger and frustration that viewers experience when confronting art that they do not understand and cannot

value as art is heightened by the sense of powerlessness they feel knowing that they cannot really have much impact on the museum's decisions about what to collect and how to display it. Contemporary art becomes prominent through a complex network made up of artists, art critics, collectors, curators, dealers, and scholars.

Collecting the art of one's own time is especially challenging because the perspective that comes with the passage of time is lacking. Experts are all too

aware that they take calculated risks with their decisions and that these may be judged differently in the future.

The notion of art experts is abhorrent to many people and directly in conflict with one of the assumptions that underlies art museums, namely that art is a universal language and anyone who can see can understand. It is clearly difficult to accept the notion of specialists in a field that has traditionally presented itself as universally accessible. In fact, the assumption that art speaks equally to all people because it is a visual language is incorrect. The kind of looking that art requires is a specialized looking framed by a particular set of values. As noted earlier, art is a culturally-bound concept, deeply imbedded in the meanings and beliefs of particular times and places. Many civilizations created beautiful objects but did

not have the word "art" in their vocabulary. Very few cultures, with Western European and American cultures being the large exceptions, created objects such as paintings for the sole purpose of installing them in museums and galleries so that they could be admired for their visual qualities.

Docents usually receive the brunt of visitors' anger since they are perceived to be representatives of the museum's authority (and accessible). There are a number of ways to handle this kind of attack. First, it is essential that docents not put themselves in the position of defending the art. This only makes matters worse. Instead,

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Some modern art can conflict with personal ideas of what art should be.

photo: Kenneth Kauffman, courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art

Questioning Modern Art

(continued from page 9)

docents should give viewers plenty of space to vent their feelings and encourage even quiet people to talk. This gives people an opportunity to sound off and, in the process, they may discover that not everyone feels the same way they do. Many people assume that all other observers perceive a situation the same as they do and that if they respond differently, it is because of some perverse willfulness rather than because they act on different perceptual information. Anthropologists label this kind of

assumption "phenomenal absolutism," reflecting an inability to accept that different people see and value things differently. Docents may poll their viewers and engage them as much as possible in discussions about their personal likes

and dislikes in order to illustrate to the assembled group that all people do not think or see alike, and that personal tastes do play an important role in the appreciation of modern art.

Docents should also seek to discover what it is about the viewer's personal definition of art that comes into conflict with the object in question. Often with abstract art, craftsmanship is the key component present in the viewer's definition but missing in the art. For many people, if the object looks easy to make it is not as artistic as something that is hard to make. There are variations on this theme

since some people have neatness in their definition and therefore don't like the messy stuff, such as the action painting of Abstract Expressionists like Jackson Pollock and Willem DeKooning, while others put the emphasis on self-expression and will get confused by the hard-edged control of a Piet Mondrian or an Elsworth Kelly.

Many visitors are overly focused on the high prices of art objects because newspapers and broadcasts about the large sums spent on art influence ideas about its worth. It is easy to demonstrate that objects may have many other values beyond monetary ones. A knickknack, for instance, has sentimental value; a flag has symbolic value; and a religious image is treasured for its spiritual and inspirational value. Art reflects cherished ideas about originality and the importance of individual expression in a world of mass-production and imitation. If some art objects are surprisingly expensive, it is because they are prized for being rare, even unique.

Informed docents will approach modern art with a spirit of adventure. Because it provides numerous opportunities for heated discussion and debates, modern art is often ideal for fostering an inquiry method approach to teaching about art.



*Danielle Rice teaches visitors how to access and appreciate modern art.
photo: Julie LaFair Miller*

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Science and Inquiry

For many of us, science is the domain of facts and figures -- a convergent discipline that seeks correct answers and exact measurements. Science, after all, explains things.

While the results of scientific research do aim toward convergent conclusions, the process is particularly reliant upon divergent thinking. Scientists consistently venture into the unknown armed only with their creativity, intellectual curiosity and resourcefulness, and powers of observation.

Science uses inquiry to propel investigations. Even the "scientific method" that scientists employ is a structure for asking questions and challenging assumptions.

Docents in science-oriented institutions who are interested in teaching about the *process* of science, as well as its results, should find inquiry-oriented activities useful. While this mode of instruction may consume more time, it deepens the educational experience, conveys the excitement of discovery, and develops greater understanding on the part of learners.

This material excerpted from
*minds in motion:
using museums to expand creative
thinking*

by Alan Gartenhaus
Sacramento, CA: Caddo Gap Press,
1991

A Sample Inquiry-oriented Science Activity

Concept: Classifications

Objectives: As learners develop and use categories of their own making to group facts and information, they will develop an understanding of the concept of classification and reasons why science works to classify all forms of matter.

Activity: Make a list of twenty items in one area of your facility. Distribute this list to students when in the appropriate gallery or area. Have the learners locate each of these items. Provide them with ample opportunity to look, learn, and ask questions.

Now, ask each learner to develop his own system of classification by "grouping like objects or life forms together." The groupings should be of each learner's own device. Groupings can be determined by appearance, function, habitat, or any other variable chosen.

Following this, discuss each participant's classification. Relate the range of variables used by the participants to those variables actually used by biologists, chemists, zoologists, geologists, or other professionals whose work relates to your institution's primary field.

Conclusion: Have participants talk about their understanding of what systems of classification are, why they are important, and how they might be useful.

Did you know . . .?

The Summer 1991 issue of *Gifted Child Quarterly* presented findings on I.Q., or intelligence quotients, researched by Mark Snyderman and Stanley Rothman. The educators reported that "scholars with any expertise in the area of intelligence and intelligence testing share a common view of the most important components of intelligence, and are convinced that it can be measured with some degree of accuracy."

The respondents considered the following elements of intelligence to be most important:

Abstract thinking or reasoning.....	99.3%
Problem solving ability.....	97.7%

These figures stand in direct contrast with such variables as:

General knowledge.....	62.4%
Goal-directedness.....	24.0%

The findings seem to reinforce the usefulness of emphasizing skills related to acquiring information and problem-solving as practiced with inquiry teaching, over the presentation of facts and isolated pieces of information.

It Works for Me ...

Docents share techniques they find successful.

A child peers under the brim of my bonnet, looks into my eyes, and gasps as I gently smile and greet him with "Hello, traveller." The revelation that the figure he approached is *real* is quickly borne to the rest of the group as they gather around me.

History ... is it just battles, dates, and artifacts? What is it if it isn't people? Not just privileged or famous people either, but everyday people --- how they lived and what they valued.

I interpret overland trail history and demonstrate homesteading skills at The High Desert Museum, in Bend, Oregon. I prepare by studying, primarily the many journals and diaries written by those well aware of the great adventure they were part of. But, it is the magic cloak of costume that helps me capture people's attention, imagination, and trust so that I might better serve as their guide.

I use a costume to become Hannah Elliott, a grandmotherly farm wife, emigrating in 1853 with my husband to a new life in the Willamette Valley in Oregon. When the gallery is empty, I slip into a quiet pose. As visitors enter, I gradually become the chatty woman who inquires about the visitors' observations and feelings, and also about what they've learned.

Sometimes, visitors find me reading a small book of poetry, or writing a letter home. Today, I write in my diary.

"I'm keeping a record of this land voyage," I tell the visitors. "Do you know why?" A pause follows that is sometimes filled with answers, sometimes not. I continue, "So that years from now, if someone is foolish enough to suggest another trip like this,

I shall simply take this out to refresh my memory, and clearly and loudly shout, 'No thank you kindly!'" My answer provokes chuckles. As I go on to disclose bits and pieces of the problems and difficulties I encountered traveling west, questions fly back and forth. "Why did you leave?" asks one man (and I am secretly pleased at his use of the word "*you*").

Would you like to use a costume to help others interpret history? Key words are "appropriate," "simple," and "practical." Generally for women, a simple blouse, long skirt, apron, shawl or scarf, and appropriate head covering can be adapted to represent most periods. For men, it need not be much more difficult. Look up colors, fabrics, accessories, and silhouettes, as well as styles for your period.

Remember, the simpler your costume the less chance for glaring error. Polyester fabrics, plastic eyeglasses (squinting is permissible and timelessly authentic), athletic shoes (bare feet are classic), fluorescent colors, wristwatches, lipstick and eyeliner, modern perfumes, and twentieth century slang can be jarring.

Most importantly, be yourself and use your own assets. If you're a grey-haired grandma, then relax and be a grey-haired grandma in the period. It *will* work; it works for me.

Geraldine Willoughby Kavanagh
docent
The High Desert Museum
Bend, OR.

It Works for Me... and it could work for others.

If you have a technique, activity, or philosophy that works for you, please share. Send your ideas, thoughts, and suggestions to:

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Thanks !!!

Within just six months of its inception, *The Docent Educator* has become a phenomenal success reaching thousands of volunteer and staff educators in all 50 States and 4 Canadian Provinces.

We wish to express our appreciation to the many individuals and institutions who believed that a professional journal for docents was an idea whose time had come.

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The Docent Educator welcomes ideas and unsolicited manuscripts. Provide practical information, activities, and techniques to docents and staff throughout North America!

A Concise Glossary of

Inquiry Related Terms

The following terms are defined as they relate to teaching with inquiry. Remembering the terminology is not as important as understanding the concepts they represent.

Active Thinking	Thinking that requires personal involvement to accomplish a mental task.
Convergent Thinking	The process of narrowing one's thoughts to a single, best, or correct response.
Closed-ended Questions	Questions that have specific, predetermined answers; usually calling for remembered factual information, and evaluated on the basis of "right or wrong" (classroom example - "true or false" questions).
Creativity	A thought process that involves generating, developing, or organizing ideas which are new to the person thinking them.
Describing Questions	"Open-ended" questions that call for any response related to one's sensory or emotional observations.
Divergent Thinking	The process of expanding one's thoughts to generate as many responses or solutions as possible before deciding.
Elaboration	A divergent thinking process calling upon one's capacity to add detail or additional layers of meaning to an idea or thing.
Evaluating Questions	"Open-ended" questions that call for pupils to reference their thoughts or ideas to the problem or thing being examined.
Flexibility	A divergent thinking process calling upon one's capacity to think of a wide variety of responses.
Fluency	A divergent thinking process calling upon one's capacity to generate a great quantity of responses.
Inquiry Teaching	The process of helping pupils learn by asking questions that prompt discovery, the acquisition of information, and understanding; also known as the "Socratic method of teaching."
Observing	Careful inspection through increased sensory involvement.
Open-ended Questions	Questions having many possible answers, and that accommodate an individual's point-of-view; often requires generating ideas, and must be evaluated subjectively based upon justification used (classroom example - essay questions that require formulating, and expounding upon, a premise, concept, or hypothesis).
Originality	A divergent thinking process calling upon one's capacity to generate highly individualized, or unique, responses.
Passive Thinking	Receiving or recalling the information or ideas provided by others without questioning or evaluating them.
Point-of-View	One's predisposed outlook or way of thinking about something based on physical, personal, cultural, and/or temporal variables.
Testing Questions	"Open-ended" questions that challenge pupils to make hypotheses or predictions based upon their ideas, thoughts, or observations.

Using Discipline-Based Art Education

A Personal Perspective

Discipline-Based Art Education, or DBAE, provides a useful, flexible structure that organizes thinking and provides effective parameters for discussing art work. The approach is based on ideas developed for over twenty years by art

educators, and has been widely supported by The Getty Center for Education in the Arts and endorsed by the National Art Education Association. DBAE uses the inquiry, or questioning,

process through four key disciplines related to art: art criticism, art production, art history, and aesthetics. A painting from the collection of the Columbus Museum of Art (Ohio), *Cornice*, by George Tooker, and a group of teenaged students illustrates this approach.

Art Criticism: Art critics concentrate on making meaning of art, and at its most fundamental level, criticism involves describing, analyzing, and interpreting.

The narrative power of Tooker's "*Cornice*" makes it a rich object for interpretation. I might begin by asking the students to identify moods the picture evokes. Once these feelings are acknowledged, students can begin to analyze how Tooker elicited these emotions. For instance, the work makes me feel claustrophobic and yet the figure is standing outdoors. Tooker accomplishes this by trapping the man between the picture plane (or me, the

viewer) and the building wall that juts into nearly two-thirds of the painting.

Interpretative issues abound. Is it, or is it not, contemplation of suicide? Is this a dream? Who does this character represent? What might the bird in the background symbolize? Whatever their views, I ask students to return to the work to provide evidence for their opinions.

Artistic Production: Artists struggle with creation, a process that transforms ideas and feelings into images. Understanding this perspective requires an interest in the artist's point of view, and what he or she physically accomplished with materials to give expression to ideas and emotions. Why that medium or material? Why those symbols? What were the challenges of production, and how were they resolved?

One discussion strategy might focus upon the source of inspiration for artistic production. The painting "*Cornice*" happened to have been specifically inspired by W.H. Auden's poem *The Sea and The Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's "The Tempest."*

I might begin by highlighting influences on Tooker's career, noting that he was particularly affected by literature. Then I could hand out, and read together, the passage relevant to this painting, which is: "Yet, at this very moment when we do at last see ourselves as we are, neither cozy nor playful, but swaying out on the ultimate wind-whipped cornice that overhangs the unabiding void — we have never stood anywhere else."

I would follow up by asking students to look at the painting and to hypothesize how Tooker had translated

"... attempt to touch upon each of the disciplines at least once, if possible ..."

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the poetry. In what other ways could these ideas have been represented? To shift the discussion to a more personal level, students could be asked if they had been inspired by music, art, literature, or film. What had been the relationship between the sources of their inspiration and their created products?

Art History: Art historians strive to construct order and sense of art from their contexts and attributes. Like critics and artists, art historians focus on art objects and experiences; however, they emphasize connections between an object and the world-at-large, and the society and time period within which it was created. The art historian's concerns are with those forces, ideas, events, and attitudes that combined to influence a particular statement. These concerns lead to such questions as: How does this work reflect the world during that time? What were the symbols of the time? How is the work different/similar to those that came before it? How might the work reflect change?

An art historical discussion of "Cornice" could concentrate on discovering details in the work that infer historical context. I might have students play historical detective, seeking evidence within the work to suggest where and when it was painted. Such aspects as the buildings' architecture, the man's clothing, his wrist watch band, and the antenna could lead students to the realization that this was a work from our own country, painted in the middle of the 20th century.

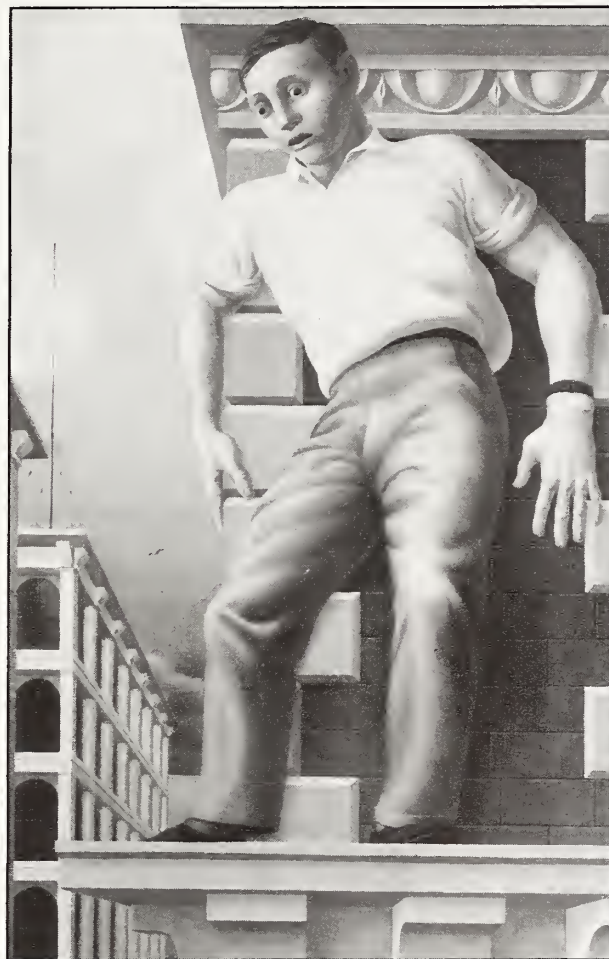
Aesthetics: Aestheticians ask "big" questions about art, such as "what's the point," and "why is one object considered to be art while another is not?" They inquire about how and why humans create symbols. It can be great fun to engage minds with such puzzles, stepping back from the nuances of individual works to a

broader discussion of the relationships among objects, or artists, or issues.

Since the subject matter of "Cornice" dominates most viewers' responses to it, an aesthetics-based discussion might concentrate on the validity of "uncertainty" and/or "suicide" as themes for art. The discussion could encompass the many purposes of art, such as social relevance or the search for beauty, helping students acknowledge art's wide range of functions. This concept of the "function of art" could be expanded to include many works of art throughout a museum's collection during a tour.

While I have isolated each discipline for purposes of explanation, concerns among the disciplines interact and merge. It would be a mistake, for the sake of purity alone, to isolate the disciplines while teaching with a work of art. And, discipline perspectives should not be forced to fit a work of art simply to include it on a tour. Instead, the work itself, combined with the design of the exhibition, should guide the emphasis.

A good guideline is attempt to touch upon each of the disciplines at least once, if possible and when appropriate during the course of a tour. Doing so offers our audiences a variety of perspectives for understanding what they see and experience in the world of art.



Cornice
George Tooker (b. 1920)
Columbus (OH) Museum of Art

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